

Jan Adamec, Hungary 1956: from a reform of socialism to a national uprising

Dizertační práce

Univerzita Karlova v Praze, Filozofická fakulta, Ústav světových dějin, Praha, 2015

Abstract

The theses aims to analyze the crisis of the Hungarian Communist regime in 1956. It begins with the internal party struggle between Prime Minister Imre Nagy and First Secretary Matyás Rákosi in 1953–1955. Khrushchev's destalinisation initiative in 1956 triggered a new wave of conflicts. The crisis within the Communist Party was then deepened by the demise of Rákosi and the installation of Ernő Gerő as his successor in July 1956 and the emotionally charged reburial of László Rajk. The crisis coincided with grave economic shortages and rising dissatisfaction in the countryside. Encouraged Hungarian students organized demonstrations on 23 October 1956 that grew into mass riots against the regime. New agents that then played a key role in the events in question entered the political arena. Firstly, the Soviet army intervened on behalf of the Hungarian Communist leadership; however, it failed to restore order or suppress the mass movement. Secondly, dozens of guerrilla-like insurgent groups fought enthusiastically against the Soviets. Khrushchev contemplated postponing the use of military force for a brief period of time; however, the Soviet leadership was then alarmed by the radicalisation of anti-Soviet sentiments within the Hungarian population and, under pressure from the Chinese Communists, opted for a massive intervention and the reinstallation of a loyal and openly pro-Soviet government and the resurrection of the already collapsed communist system. The drama of the Hungarian Uprising continued when the shattered armed groups of insurgents were replaced by trade union bodies and factory revolutionary committees in the resistance against Kádár's newly installed regime until the end of 1956.